

REMARKS

Applicants have carefully reviewed and considered the Office Action mailed on November 20, 2006, and the references cited therewith.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-5, 7, 10-14, 17-21, and 24-27 stand rejected. Claims 6, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, and 28-30 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Independent claim 1 is amended to generally include the teachings of claims 5 and 6.

Independent claim 12 is amended to generally include the teachings of claim 16.

Independent claim 21 is amended to generally include the teachings of claim 23.

Independent claim 25 is amended to generally include the teachings of claim 30.

Claims 5, 6, 16, 23 and 30 have been cancelled without prejudice.

Independent claim 31 has been added and substantially includes the teachings of independent claim 1 and dependent claim 9.

Claims 32-40 have been added depending from new independent claim 31 and substantially correspond to claims 2-8 and 10-11.

Accordingly, claims 1-4, 7-15, 17-22, 24-29, and 31-40 are pending.

Rejection of the Claims

Claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 10, 12-14, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. 6,424,994 to Pirich et al. (“Pirich”). Claims 2, 3, 11, 18-20, 24, 26, and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pirich in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,079,495 to Pearce et al (“Pearce”).

Applicants appreciate the Examiner’s remarks noting that claims 6, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, and 28-30 contain allowable subject matter if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations recited in the base claim and any intervening claims. With this amendment, Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 12, 21 and 25 to substantially include the teachings of claims 6, 16, 23 and 30, respectively. Additionally, Applicants have added new

independent claim 31 to substantially include the teachings of claims 1 and 9 as well as claims 32-40 depending thereupon. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are in condition for allowance.

Having dealt with all the objections raised by the Examiner, it is respectfully submitted that the present application, as amended, is in condition for allowance. Thus, early allowance is earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner desires personal contact for further disposition of this case, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned Attorney at 603.668.6560.

In the event there are any fees due, please charge them to our Deposit Account No. 50-2121.

Respectfully submitted,

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